A

REVIEW

OF THE

POLITICAL CONDUCT

OF THE

HON. C. J. FOX.

ADDRESSED TO THE

CELEBRATORS OF HIS BIRTH DAY,

AND

OTHER ADMIRERS.

Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus,
Tam cari capitis.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

JANUARY 24th, 1800, the Birth-day of Mr. Fox was celebrated by his friends and votaries at Edinburgh, with such honours as are due to the most illustrious patriots and benefactors of mankind. A Gentleman of that city, who had been informed of the homage paid on this occasion to Mr. Fox, and who knew the respectability of some of the Gentlemen who bestowed it, was led to make the simple and short enquiry concerning the subject, *quantum meruit?* Allowing every credit to the talents of Mr. Fox—and who, in such an allowance, can go too far? —the author inquired, 'What has been the rate of utility to that of abilities?' and 'What has been the amount of good actually done through those abilities?' Taking up that comprehensive criterion, certainly the fair test to apply to any exertions, compared with the power that produced them, he stated the result of his sentiments to a friend in London.

His friend, seeing the just observation and strong reasoning contained in the Letter, and that its arguments applied not only to the Celebrators of Mr. Fox's Birth-day at that time and place, but to all those who judged the conduct of that Gentleman meritorious, strongly recommended that it should be made public. The Author consented.

The Editor wished it to be brought out soon after the occasion which produced the work, but various circumstanees have delayed it till the present time.

The Editor is confident that, in delivering the following Letter to the Public, he gives documents and arguments which very strongly characterize its subject, and that in it may be seen a very striking picture of the political conduct of CHARLES JAMES FOX.

TO

THE CELEBRATORS

OF

MR. FOX'S BIRTH-DAY.

THERE is no sentiment in the human mind more congenial to the best feelings of our nature, than gratitude and respect towards those who have been the benefactors of the human race. In some countries statues have been decreed to them, and monuments of great magnificence and splendour erected at the public expence. In others, the pen of the poet and historian has been employed to write their panegyric.

You have thought fit to adopt a different mode of shewing your respect for Mr. Fox, by celebrating his birth-day in the revellings of a public dinner. This is a mode adapted to every capacity, and beyond all others the

most fit upon this occasion; as the tavern is the theatre to which he has of late thought proper to confine his public appearance.

Had your orgies been celebrated in any of your own houses, I never should have thought of calling the public attention to them; as in this free and happy country every man's house is his castle. But when men of rank and fortune, year after year, celebrate the birth-day of any subject with a degree of ostentation which they do not bestow on that of our good and gracious Sovereign himself, their conduct naturally excites inquiry how far this mark of distinction is well placed.

I happen to be one of those who are of opinion (and I believe the opinion is pretty general) that, whether we consider the public or the private tenor of Mr. Fox's life, he is the last man in Great Britain who is entitled to receive marks of respect from any true friend, whatever he may be from the

enemies of his country. The most superficial examination of his conduct, from the beginning of his political career to the present hour, will establish this assertion beyond the possibility of doubt. After it is established, I leave it with the impartial world to judge, whether his devotees are to be considered as good citizens, deserving well of their country.

Mr. Fox was brought into Parliament before he was twenty-one years of age. He began his political course, first as a Lord of the Admiralty, afterwards as a Lord of the Treasury; and in both situations he was a zealous and steady partizan for Government, and continued so for four years, till his Majesty was pleased to order a new Commission of the Treasury without his name. The alteration which this omission produced in Mr. Fox's opinions, with respect to measures and men, is scarcely to be believed. All at once the counsels which formerly had received his fullest approbation, and most un-

qualified support, as the wisest and best which human ability could devise, entirely changed their nature, and instantly became the most improper, the weakest, and the most mischievous, that folly could suggest or wickedness invent. The men, too, who had, till he was turned out of office, filled all the departments of the State with distinguished abilities, became all of a sudden completely unfit for the trust, and such as must in a very short period ruin the country, if they were continued in their employments.

If this flagrant and shameless inconsistency were attended with no other effect, but to point out the persons who are guilty of it to public scorn and contempt, there would be much cause to rejoice, and none to regret. But, unfortunately, it is attended with consequences of a very different nature. For, if the conduct of those who are loudest in their professions of love for their country, can with certainty be traced to such an impure source as the disappointment of

their ambitious schemes, and their deprivation of the lucrative offices which they held under Government, it brings patriotism itself into discredit, and leads us to consider it as an empty name.

As in the wisest Administration there must be errors, and in the purest abuses, it has ever been the anxious wish of the best men amongst us, that there should always be in Parliament an Opposition, respectable for their abilities, for their property; but, above all, for their personal good character, and for the genuine patriotism which influences their conduct. One of the many services which Mr. Fox has rendered his country, is to deprive it of this phalanx, the strongest bulwark of our rights and liberties, or at least the placing it in his own hands, and those of others, his associates, in whom the public have no confidence; and who, therefore, can never operate as a proper check upon the measures of Administration, even where there is occasion for a check.

It is extremely unfortunate for this illustrious senator, who is the idol of your admiration, that his character, not being founded on principle, is full of contradictions and inconsistencies; and that, in the few cases in which he preserved any consistency in his conduct, such conduct was in direct contradiction to the good of his country, and such as would have been 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance.' Of this a most remarkable and striking proof occurred during the American war, as well as in the more important events of the present war. For though it be true that, being out of office, he persevered with perfect consistency in his opposition to all the measures of Government with respect to the American war (and that too in language which often breathed a sort of triumph over the distresses of the country, and so violent and inflammatory as could not fail to increase the confidence and aid the cause of the rebels), yet it is no less true, that this consistency was displayed, at

least for the last years of the war, in a line of conduct extremely injurious to his country, and in direct opposition to her most important interests. For whatever diversity of opinion there may have been as to the expediency or justness of the American war in the commencement of it, is it possible to maintain, after the Americans had not only thrown off all connection with the mother country by their declaration of independence, but also formed an alliance with our most inveterate foe, and involved us in war with three of the most powerful states in Europe, that any good citizen and friend to his country would any longer speak in their defence, or refuse to arm against them? If the conduct of Mr. Fox is to be judged by this rule, and it is certainly a fair rule of judging of the conduct of a real patriot and good citizen, what is to be thought of him, and of you who are his admirers? In place of withdrawing his support from the Americans, in consequence of an event which demonstrated that the object they had

in view, by their rebellion, was very different from what they intended, his declamations in their favour were every day more violent; and his invectives against the measures of Government more indecent and intemperate! —rejoicing, to use his own words, over every victory of a Washington, and weeping over every defeat of a Montgomery! In place of arming against the common foe, and strengthening the hands of Government, in this dangerous and alarming crisis, he exerted all his talents in representing the country as in a much worse situation than that in which it really was. He disregarded the encouragement which such misrepresentations gave to an enemy; his evident object being to distress the King's servants, and withdraw from them the good opinion and confidence of their country. And, to leave not the shadow of doubt as to the purity of his motives, when men of rank and property, deeply impressed with the situation of the country, proposed to raise bodies of men to make up for the losses

we had sustained, Mr. Fox, in place of joining in the patriotic undertaking, endeavoured to put a stop to it, by representing these efforts as *illegal* and *unconstitutional*; as if any thing could be illegal and unconstitutional that was dictated by the imperious call of necessity, of self-preservation, and of self-defence.

Is it possible that any of you can be so weak, or so blinded by prejudice, as to believe that Mr. Fox's vehement opposition to Government, when surrounded by so many formidable enemies, was dictated by a true spirit of patriotism? Can you deny, that at this crisis every lover of his country was called upon to sacrifice every narrow and selfish idea of party, and to employ every exertion in his power to save his country from the difficulties in which she was involved?

I trust I may take it for granted, that it was not Mr. Fox's conduct during the Ame-

rican war, which could possibly excite your approbation and applause, or that of any lover of his country. I shall next beg leave to ask, whether it takes its rise from the means he employed to become Minister, by a coalition with Lord North.

With respect to this measure, I am confident there never was, nor indeed could be, but one sentiment in the breast of any honest man; namely, a mixture of contempt and indignation at a measure, the most corrupt in its origin, the most shameful in its nature, and the most mischievous in its consequences, that ever was framed by inordinate and unprincipled ambition.

I do not mean to say, that men, who have acted in opposition to one another in Parliament, can never act together or coalesce without being influenced by corrupt and disgraceful motives. As an abstract proposition, the very reverse is certainly true. But every case must be judged by its own circumstances; and, judging by that rule, what

can we think of that man's candour and truth, who (after having for a series of years exerted every nerve, and used every argument which his ingenuity could invent, both in Parliament and out of it, to represent the King's Ministers as the weakest, the most ignorant, the most unfit as well as the most corrupt and wicked of men, who, by incapacity or treachery, had already lost America, and would soon reduce the British Empire to the limits of this Island—men, in short, who were in every view a curse to the country over whose affairs they were too long permitted to preside) would enter into a partnership with them for managing those affairs which he had declared them so unqualified to manage? What is to be thought of that man's sincerity and truth, who, having in his place in the House of Commons expressed such invectives, accompanied by a declaration of his sanguine hopes, that the period was fast approaching in which they would receive, at the tribunal of public justice, signal punishment for the magnitude of their offences on a

public scaffold; who could in the year 1782 gravely declare, that Lord North deserved death, and pledge himself to bring him to the block, and, within a few months after, could enter into a coalition with this atrocious criminal, and be loud in his praises as an able, faithful, and upright Minister?

It will require no small degree of ingenuity to give any satisfactory account of this part of Mr. Fox's conduct, and to extricate him from the dilemma into which he in this matter reduced himself. For he must either have believed what he said, or he must not have believed it. If he really believed Lord North to be that weak and wicked Minister he had for a series of years held him out to be, how could he become the colleague in office of incapacity and wickedness? If he did not believe it, what credit is due to his declarations, or what pretensions can he make to candour, sincerity, and truth?

It is far from my intention to run over all the errors, contradictions, and inconsisten-

cies of Mr. Fox's life, which would fill a large volume. I shall not dwell, therefore, upon his resignation of his office of Secretary of State, because one Noble Lord was placed at the head of the Treasury, when he wished a different one; a measure which excited great disapprobation in the minds of the best men of the country, who could not but consider his abandoning his post at this most critical period, for such a reason, as the decided mark of a very dangerous spirit of ambition, which knew no restraint, and would bear no controul. Neither shall I make any observations on his famous India Bill, which would have transferred the whole power of India, with its immense patronage, into his own hands and a few of his friends, totally independent of the King and Parliament—an *imperium in imperio* of a very alarming and dangerous nature. I shall also pass over the gross inconsistency of declaiming against the peace with America, as ignominious in itself, and totally inconsistent with the honour and interest of Britain, though he had often proposed worse terms,

and repeatedly declared, that peace with the Americans upon any terms was the only means to save the country, and of maintaining, without a blush, that our finances, our army, and navy, which the year before had been in such an exhausted and reduced state that the King's Ministers ought to lose their heads for it, were all at once become flourishing and powerful, and fully adequate to the continuance of the war with certainty of success. Neither do I, for many reasons, wish to dwell upon the flagrant, and (consistently with any pretence to principle) irreconcileable contradiction, of exalting the House of Commons at one period above the other branches of the Legislature, because it was then under his controul, and at another period proposing to confer sovereign power *without the consent of Parliament*; a measure which the most servile courtier or the most strenuous supporter of arbitrary power never maintained, and was for the first time brought forward by *the President of the Whig Club.*

But gross as were the inconsistencies, and mischievous as were the politics of Mr. Fox during the American war, the coalition which followed it, and the immediate subsequent years, these were of little importance when compared to his conduct during the arduous struggle in which we are now, and have been for some years, engaged, in defence of our laws, our liberties, our religion, and our government, against the insolent pretensions of that desolating tyranny which has overrun the rest of Europe.

It is well known that two objects of the very last importance have for some years occupied the minds, and received the most constant and unremitted attention from, the Executive Government; namely, the defence of the country against the arms of those sanguinary barbarians, who threaten to extirpate us from the face of the earth as an independent nation, and also against the insidious and no less dangerous poison of their seditious doctrines of revolution and equality,

which, for their own selfish purposes, they have so industriously propagated amongst us. Both these dangers have hitherto been, and I trust ever will be, repelled, and kept at a distance from our happy island, by the firm, steady, and able conduct of the persons who, fortunately for us, direct his Majesty's councils. But will it be said that Mr. Fox gave any aid or assistance in this alarming crisis? or can it be denied that he put his weight into the opposite scale, and acted a part, both in Parliament and out of it, much more like that which was to have been expected from a representative of the National Assembly of France, or a member of one of our seditious societies at home, than from a British Senator who had no object in view but the good of his country? This is no groundless assertion, no calumny against Mr. Fox, but a fact that I shall demonstrate by proof which cannot be controverted, namely, his own conduct and speeches in Parliament and out of it, both in relation to the war with France, and to the wise and

judicious and necessary measures which were adopted by the Executive Government to check the increase of sedition and jacobinism in the country.

To begin with his conduct in respect to the war with France. For some time after the French Revolution, both parties in the House of Commons avoided any discussion or even mention of it, being of opinion that it was not properly before them. This silence, it would appear, was extremely irksome to Mr Fox, who was impatient for an opportunity of bringing forward his panegyric upon that glorious event. In a speech upon the army estimates, in 1790, he, for the first time, took occasion to deliver his sentiments on the French Revolution, as a measure affecting civil society in general, and this country in particular. In his view of its effects upon civil society, he considered it as 'the most glorious event in the history of mankind;' and, as affecting this country,

he argued, that 'the new form of Government France was likely to assume would make her a better neighbour, and less propense to hostility, than when she was subject to the cabal and intrigue of ambitious and interested statesmen.'

How far the sound judgment, sagacity, and political wisdom which was exhibited in both parts of this panegyric, (upon an event which could not fail to occupy and alarm the thoughts of every man who reflects and stands in awe of the misery and desolation which have been brought upon the earth) points him out to you as an object of admiration, I cannot presume to judge; but, with the country at large, I am confident it called the soundness of his judgment as much into question, as that and many other circumstances did the fairness of his intentions and the uprightness of his views. For, with upright intentions, and, indeed, without a mind fit for any change or revolution, to which desperate circumstances or

unbounded ambition could impel, what man, who had the good fortune to be born under the free and happy government of Great Britain, could be capable of declaring that 'the French Revolution was the greatest event for the happiness of mankind that had happened since the creation of the world,' that it was 'a beautiful and stupendous fabric,' with many other such extravagant expressions of praise and admiration?

Nor was this eulogium pronounced at the commencement of the Revolution, when better expectations might be formed from it, but after the Church was robbed of her property, the Nobles deprived of their rights, and their excellent King kept a state prisoner, subject to the caprice of their democratical demagogues, as the first fruits of this 'stupendous fabric,' their new Government; and after they had, by their decree of the 19th of November 1792, sounded the trumpet of sedition and rebellion all over Europe, by openly and avowedly declaring that they would protect

and assist all discontented and seditious subjects who applied to them, as a specimen of their conduct to other States.

It is not very easy to discover with what good intention such eulogiums could be bestowed upon a system, the very outset of which was marked by the most flagrant injustice, and which was so totally different from that Government under which this country had long enjoyed a degree of happiness and prosperity unexampled among mankind, especially at a period when it was well known that the constitution under which we live was vilified and traduced by great numbers, who favoured a mode of Government on the model of France. Nor was it at all unnatural to expect that the admirers of the French Revolution would be of this number; as they who approved of the abolition of the hierarchy, the aristocracy, and the monarchy, in one country, could not very consistently be for their continuance in another.

But if it be difficult to reconcile all this to good intention, what is to be thought of Mr. Fox's subsequent conduct, the spirit of which is, in my apprehension, in direct opposition to the peace, prosperity, and legally established liberties of this country? It would far exceed my bounds to enter into a detail of his conduct respecting either the war with France or the seditious societies, and the measures that were taken for their suppression. A few observations, however, shall be made, and a few questions put to his admirers; and I shall be extremely happy if they can give a satisfactory answer.

Can the attempts to over-awe Parliament, by stirring up the people without doors, and exciting the lowest and least informed manufacturers and mechanics in the large and populous towns to petition for peace, be considered as a measure that deserves praise?

Or can the joy and exultation which was manifested on occasion of the 'glorious vic-

tory of Jemappe,' as Mr. Fox termed it, or when advantage was obtained over our allies, be considered as reflecting much honour or credit upon those who were capable of deriving pleasure and satisfaction from such a source?

And yet Mr. Fox lamented all the defeats of the French, and rejoiced in all their victories, even when those victories threatened to overwhelm the continent of Europe; and, by facilitating their conquest of Holland, to bring this most dreadful of all evils, their principles and their government, into the very heart of the country.

Was it the part of a good citizen to oppose through all its stages, with the utmost vehemence, as a violation of the law of nations, a Bill for removing out of the kingdom the emissaries of France, when their numbers were so great, and their principles so dangerous, as to excite much alarm and apprehension in the minds of all the wise men in the

country? A measure, too, which, as it separated all those persecuted emigrants who fled to a humane and generous people for protection from those vile miscreants who came for the most mischievous purposes, was anxiously wished for by all the loyal and virtuous among them.

If this measure of precaution, or rather of self-defence, had been omitted by the Executive Government, and the horde of French emissaries with which the country was overrun, in co-operation with the seditious at home, had excited any commotion or disturbance in the country, what invectives would not Mr. Fox have thundered out against his Majesty's Ministers for their weakness and imbecility, if not treachery, in neglecting so necessary and so obvious a precaution, as by an Alien Bill to remove these pests out of the country, before they had brought their plans of mischief to maturity!

Is it possible to approve of Mr. Fox's opposition to the Traitorous Correspondence Bill, of which he said, that 'there never was a Bill which tended so much to invert the base of the constitution, and to violate every principle of liberty;' that 'if the House passed the Bill, they would pass a Bill subversive of the best principles of the constitution,' although it is perfectly evident, that without it the enemy would have been enabled to carry on the war against us by our own resources, and to have its agents in the midst of us, in close correspondence with the enemies abroad and traitors at home.

Can it be denied that it was more the part of a citizen of France, than of a good subject of Great Britain, after those sanguinary tyrants had invaded one of our allies, whom by the faith of treaties we were bound to protect; after they had in a public decree offered protection to all rebellious subjects who should apply to them; and even after

they had in fact *declared war* against us, (and that too during the pendency of a negociation) to exert every nerve to discredit the national honour and justice, by endeavouring to show, contrary to the clearest proof, to the sense not of this country only but of all Europe, that though the war was declared by France it was provoked by us, and that it was occasioned by the haughtiness, the injustice, and the aggression of Britain?

It is puerile and absurd to talk of aggression where the French are concerned. Were the Dutch, the Venetians, all the other States of Italy, were the States of Germany the aggressors? Were the Swiss the aggressors? No man in England knew better than Mr. Fox did that the French tyrants were determined to go to war with this country as soon as they were in a situation to do so, as has been fairly acknowledged by Dumourier, and fully demonstrated from the writings of Brissot and his partizans, and yet he still persisted in asserting that the war was occasioned by the British Parliament.

Was it like a person, whose bosom was warmed by one spark of feeling for the honour and dignity of Britain, obstinately to persist in motions for the recognition of the French Republic; in motions for sending an ambassador to the banditti who then tyrannized over that unhappy country? Before doing so, we must have laid aside all regard for moral principles, and all horror for acts of murder and rapine, and court the amity of a Government under which property was destroyed, justice annihilated, and every thing which could civilize society, or tend to the happiness of mankind, blasted and defaced from the face of the earth.

Was it the part of a true patriot to persevere, session after session, in proposing terms of peace to France, when there was no reason to suppose that, after we had degraded ourselves by the proposal, it would be listened to by those sanguinary tyrants, who openly avowed that 'they could not be safe without lighting a fire in the four corners of Europe?'

When Mr. Fox proposed so strange a recognition, and so humiliating an embassy, was he not bound to produce his authority for saying, that all the projects of intended ambition, all the detestable schemes of promoting sedition and rebellion in other States, would be given up and departed from if we offered to treat with them? Was it the decree of the 19th November, 1792, or those of the 15th and 25th December, the same year, at the very time that Mr. Fox was urging a treaty with them, that satisfied him of the sincerity of their boasted pacific dispositions? Is he still of this opinion, after this country has in vain condescended at two different times to negociate for peace? It is true they did not refuse to treat with us; yet that no conditions short of absolute submission would be accepted of is so clear, that it would be wasting time to repeat the proofs. This is evident to all Europe, and the French themselves do not deny its truth.

It is well worthy of remark, that when Mr. Fox was urging us to negociate with

France, he frequently declared, that 'if justice could not be obtained by negociation, then unanimity and zeal, with the justice of our cause, would supply every defect.' How far his conduct has been in conformity to these declarations I leave it to the impartial world to judge. After the enemy had twice refused to agree to equitable terms of peace, instead of giving, as he had pledged himself to do, his assistance to strengthen the hands of Government in repelling the common foe, being disappointed in all his ambitious schemes, and hopeless of power, he deserted his duty in Parliament, and, as far as depended upon him, allowed the ship to drift upon the rocks because he could not obtain the command.

If it were possible to encrease the enormity of such conduct, it would receive a great addition from the period which he made choice of. He did so in the darkest hour Britain ever saw; when the seditious doctrines which had for many years been disseminated, and published with so much industry in news-

papers and pamphlets of the most mischievous kind, had wrought a temporary departure from their duty and loyalty in the gallant defenders of their country.

It would be endless to mention all the measures which Mr. Fox brought forward in the House of Commons, the effects of which, whatever might be the intention, were to assist the cause of France; such as, 'not to intermeddle in the interior concerns of France—not to enter into an engagement with any foreign power, so as to hinder us from making a separate peace with France—not to insist on great concessions from her, because every State, on the conclusion of a war, has a right to avail itself of its conquests towards an indemnification'—and many others of the same nature, not one of which has any foundation in justice or common sense, or in the law of nations, as universally received and recognized by all civilized States. Suffice it to say, with respect to this part of his public conduct, that if the National As-

sembly of France had been permitted to have a representative in the House of Commons of Great Britain, it is difficult to conceive what line of conduct he could have adopted different from that which Mr. Fox thought proper to pursue from the commencement of the French Revolution, while he continued to attend his duty in Parliament.

As to that part of his conduct which respects the seditious societies so common in all parts of the country, a few words will demonstrate, that it was very different from what was to have been expected from a good man or good citizen.

It is but too well known that at this period the visionary projects of new and unproved plans of government from the shores of France began to present themselves to a very numerous class in this country, whose principles grew up in silence, (as there was at that time no apprehension or distrust among the loyal and well-affected) and who formed them-

selves into societies, under a variety of names, abusing, in the very face of the Legislature, our own constitution, and bestowing the most extravagant encomiums on the new Government of France. When the proceedings of these societies, both by the correspondence which they held with foreign clubs for the purpose of disseminating the most dangerous principles, and by their industrious distribution through this country of writings utterly subversive of all civil society and subordination, excited great and serious alarm in the wisest and best men amongst us, and united together, with a few exceptions, all the real friends of their country, of whatever party, in support of our laws and our Government, a most wise and judicious proclamation was issued in May 1792 against sedition. This proclamation, which, with the measures by which it was followed up by the Executive Government, is well known to have delivered us from the most dreadful of all evils, anarchy, gave Mr. Fox the greatest offence, and was vilified and abused by him in the most virulent terms. 'It was (he said) a proclama-

tion on which he hardly knew how to express himself, not knowing in which way to reprobate it most, whether for its impotence or its malice. A most potent measure for promoting mischief, and better calculated for the dissemination of all the vices of a despotic Government than had ever been before introduced into a free State.'

The sole object of the proclamation being to put a stop to the circulation of wicked and seditious writings, to put a stop to correspondences with sundry persons in foreign parts for forwarding criminal and rebellious purposes in this country, and to rouse the magistrates throughout the kingdom to vigilance in the vigorous execution of their duty, opposition to, or complaint of it, was only to be looked for from those seditious persons whose mischievous exertions it tended to suppress.* This being its object, it never could have been expected that it would be treated with so much asperity by a British Senator,

* See Parliamentary Debates.

and much less was it to have been expected that the serious alarm which was excited in the minds of the firmest and most considerate men in the kingdom would have been attempted to be held up to ridicule and contempt.* Nor will it be easy to convince the impartial and considerate amongst us, that any man would have made the attempt who was not influenced by private and selfish views, to which he was ready to sacrifice the good of his country.

Next year, after the progress of the French arms on the continent, and the increase of their detestable principles in this country, rendered a second proclamation necessary, Mr. Fox abused it in still more virulent terms than he had done the former; and painted the alarms which arose in the breast of every Briton who felt one spark of patriotism or love for his country in still more invidious colours than those of the former year. Nay, at the very time when it was notorious that

* See Opposition Speeches and Newspapers, *passim*.

persons from this country had been received as British Ambassadors at the bar of the National Assembly, and that others had gone the length of giving supplies to the Jacobin army, (probably upon an engagement of military assistance to promote their designs in England) he denied in the most violent terms the existence of any such disposition amongst us, and went so far as to say, that 'the supposition of the growth of a Jacobin spirit in England was a libel on the nation;' and attributed all the evils which the country was labouring under to the proclamations against sedition, which had been issued that and the preceding year.

The virulence and abuse which Mr. Fox lavished against the proclamations, and all other writings which are calculated to preserve the peace of the country, could only be equalled by the praise and protection which he gave to writings of a very opposite tendency, and their authors. In his countenance and protection of such authors and their writings, he went so far as to deny

that any political writing, conveying the author's opinions upon Government, could be termed a libel, or considered as a fit object of prosecution, without putting an end to the liberty of the press; and this extraordinary doctrine was maintained too at a time in which the press had in another country been made the grand instrument in the subversion of order, of morals, and of religion itself. After the authors of some seditious publications were tried and convicted, he, to counterbalance the effect of this, instantly promoted the formation of a society with the title of *The Friends of the Liberty of the Press*, no doubt insinuating that this liberty had lately been violated. This society, at their very first meeting, returned thanks to Mr. Erskine for his defence of that vile incendiary, Paine; affording in this manner a very public declaration of their principles and the objects they had in view.

The danger in which the country was involved in consequence of a convention of the

persons from this country had been received as British Ambassadors at the bar of the National Assembly, and that others had gone the length of giving supplies to the Jacobin army, (probably upon an engagement of military assistance to promote their designs in England) he denied in the most violent terms the existence of any such disposition amongst us, and went so far as to say, that 'the supposition of the growth of a Jacobin spirit in England was a libel on the nation;' and attributed all the evils which the country was labouring under to the proclamations against sedition, which had been issued that and the preceding year.

The virulence and abuse which Mr. Fox lavished against the proclamations, and all other writings which are calculated to preserve the peace of the country, could only be equalled by the praise and protection which he gave to writings of a very opposite tendency, and their authors. In his countenance and protection of such authors and their writings, he went so far as to deny

that any political writing, conveying the author's opinions upon Government, could be termed a libel, or considered as a fit object of prosecution, without putting an end to the liberty of the press; and this extraordinary doctrine was maintained too at a time in which the press had in another country been made the grand instrument in the subversion of order, of morals, and of religion itself. After the authors of some seditious publications were tried and convicted, he, to counterbalance the effect of this, instantly promoted the formation of a society with the title of *The Friends of the Liberty of the Press*, no doubt insinuating that this liberty had lately been violated. This society, at their very first meeting, returned thanks to Mr. Erskine for his defence of that vile incendiary, Paine; affording in this manner a very public declaration of their principles and the objects they had in view.

The danger in which the country was involved in consequence of a convention of the

most seditious and worst men in it, with the avowed purpose of overawing the Legislature, and, under the pretext of reform, of subverting and overturning our laws, our liberties, and our government, to make way for one upon the model of France, can never be forgotten.

Nor can the joy and exultation be much approved of which Mr. Fox so frequently and so publicly expressed, because the persons who were brought to trial in London were acquitted from the charge of treason; although every person must admit, that if not of treason,* they certainly were guilty of the worst and most aggravated sedition, and that they were following the footsteps of the Jacobins with the utmost zeal. For it is but too well known that the great object of the Jacobin system is to excite the lowest class of the people to range themselves under ambitious leaders, for the pillage and destruction

* It might not be treason, because not specified as such by law; but the moral guilt of a plan for subverting the constitution is not the less criminal from not being comprised in a legal definition.

of the more eminent orders in the community; to persuade them that their sole object is to prevent the poor from any longer being the instruments and victims of the rich, to chastise the rich for past oppression, and deprive them of power of continuing it in future.

When many meetings in Edinburgh, London, and in various parts of the kingdom, were publicly assembled, in open defiance of the established authorities of the country, for disseminating this Jacobin poison, and for the mischievous purpose of making separate parties of the higher and lower ranks, and for making declamatory invectives against the established orders in the State, in order to stimulate the unthinking multitude to rise against them and pull them down, the Legislature found it absolutely necessary to interfere, and bring in a bill for the suppression of seditious meetings; a bill to which we are under the greatest obligations, as it secured quiet and tranquillity in every corner of the kingdom.

Mr. Fox's opposition to this salutary and necessary measure has certainly made too deep an impression upon every thinking man in the country ever to be effaced from his memory. The zeal and unremitting industry with which he and his friends used every exertion without doors to procure the signatures and marks of the lowest and most uninformed inhabitants, in different parts of the country as well as in the metropolis, to a petition against the passing of a law, of the real tendency or true merit of which they were totally incapable to judge, could only be equalled by the inflammatory language which he thought proper to hold in the House of Commons upon this occasion. For it was in the course of some of these debates, that he thought proper to bring forward his revolutionary doctrines—that 'in every country the people are the legitimate sovereign'—that 'the people have a right to cashier their Governor, as James II. was cashiered, when the ends of Government

are not accomplished'—that 'the principles of the Revolution have made the Crown of Great Britain elective'—that 'forms of government may grow out of shape'—and, to crown all, that 'the act of parliament against seditious meetings was such a violation of the liberty of the subject, that he considered resistance to the established government as now no longer a matter of *duty*, but of *prudence*.' This was a sentiment, if not treasonable, at least so seditious and inflammatory, that it was matter of surprise to many how it came to escape the notice of the Attorney-General, as the obvious scope and tendency of it was to stir up the people to insurrection, if they had sufficient force to rebel against the established government with a prospect of success.

It is not easy to conceive for what good end, at a time like this, (when the foundations of all ancient and established governments, such as ours, to which people submit, both because they are good in themselves

and because they are born under them, are attempted to be undermined by perilous theories) any good citizen should be fond of declaring such principles as these, and preaching up the dangerous doctrine of resistance to the established government. The very foundation of all government, and of all order in civil society, is the principle on which voluntary and habitual obedience is given to established authority; nor is it a light matter to endeavour to shake or invalidate this principle. I feel myself a member of regulated society, and should wish to support established order. I am the subject of a mild and equitable government, and I wish to preserve that government which gives us all protection. It must be a matter of the deepest concern to all who wish well to their country, to observe what is still carrying on here, in defiance of every evil which has been felt, and will long continue to be felt, from the introduction of new principles among other nations; and yet our pretended patriots never ceased declaiming for a radical reform, that is, for

innovation, and change in our excellent constitution and government, and, in fact, a radical subversion of it.

Every measure that was taken to suppress sedition, or punish those who were guilty of it, Mr. Fox seemed to feel as an attack upon his dearest interests; and he fell upon those who brought forward or supported such measures, with all the zeal and warmth with which men of honour defend their particular and bosom friends when attacked. And so much did he and his friends resent the obstruction of sedition, by suppressing the factious clubs from which it was disseminated with great industry, that, soon after the act was passed for this purpose, they absented themselves from Parliament, and since that period their political deliberations are chiefly to be learned from the records of the Whig Club.

Since the period of Mr. Fox's desertion of his duty in Parliament, he has been occa-

sionally in the House of Commons; but neither the occasions on which he attended, nor his conduct when there, were at all calculated to compensate for his former errors, or to make us forget the injuries which he had done to his country.

His first appearance after the secession was at the meeting of Parliament after the great run upon the Bank in spring 1797, when the enemy had hopes of succeeding against us by the failure of our pecuniary resources and of our public credit; and when of course the support of that credit, and of the Bank, which was nearly connected with the public credit, was an object of the first importance with all the friends of their country. But this was not the line of conduct which Mr. Fox thought proper to pursue. Without any inquiry into the truth of the fact, and without any tenderness or consideration for pecuniary difficulties, which of all men in England he should have been the first to feel, he declared the Bank of England to be

in a state of insolvency, and, there is much ground to believe, came to the House of Commons for the express purpose of making this declaration: *si hoc licuisset non licuisset tibi.* Although the fact had been true, this public declaration of it to the whole world was certainly not the mode that a disinterested patriot would have chosen for encouraging the friends and discouraging the enemies of his country. But what language is sufficiently strong to reprobate the conduct of the person who accuses the credit of his country, and charges it with being in a state of insolvency, when it is not so, and when the funds of the Bank were infinitely beyond the demands upon it? What is to be thought of that man who is capable, from private motives, of destroying the reputation and blasting the character of his nearest and dearest friend? and yet that is but a trifling fault, a mere venial transgression, when compared to the destroying the credit of his country, and that, too, at the most critical and alarming crisis in which it ever was placed. This is

certainly a species of parricide, and that too of the worst and most detestable kind.

Another of these appearances was during the dependence of the Assessed Tax bill; when, instead of giving his countenance to a new scheme of finance, calculated for a situation in which uncommon exertions were necessary, or substituting a better in its place, he took up the time of the House with declamations against the King's Ministers, with eulogiums upon the new constitution of France, and with insisting that the country could not be saved without a radical reform, unexplained, and to an indefinite extent. In short, to make up for the time he had lost during his secession from Parliament, he introduced into this speech as much inflammatory matter as, properly divided, might have lasted him for a whole session; and, with his usual consistency, harangued in favour of a general union of all parties, as the only measure that could save the country, at the very instant that he was doing every thing in his power

to divide and distract, by declamatory speeches in support of our implacable foes.

Precisely of the same nature and spirit were Mr. Fox's appearances upon the breaking out of the rebellion in Ireland; his evidence to the excellent character of that traitor to his country, by his own confession, O'Connor, with respect to whom he bore testimony, that 'he was of the same political principles with himself;' his appearances in the Whig Club and other such meetings, which procured him the honour of having his name struck off from the list of Privy Counsellors; and many others of the same nature, which might be enlarged upon, were it not time that I should draw to a conclusion.

From the cursory view which has been now taken of Mr. Fox's public conduct, I trust I have made it perfectly clear, that, unless it be considered as a matter of honour or duty in any member of Parliament to continue a systematic opposition, losing all sight

of the good of his country for the purpose of putting Government under difficulties, until he shall have the principal direction of affairs placed in his hands; unless that, when all such hopes are at an end, he may desert his post in the hour of danger by absenting himself from Parliament, than which a greater breach of trust cannot possibly be conceived, Mr. Fox's public conduct cannot be considered to be of that nature to entitle him to approbation, much less to respect or admiration, from any good man or good citizen, who wishes well to the prosperity of his country, and to the preservation of the excellent laws and government under which it is our singular good fortune to live. Our laws are just in their principle, temperate in their effects, impartial in their application, and merciful in their execution; possessing the sanction of time, of wisdom, and of experience; and our Government is calculated to bestow as much happiness upon its subjects, of all ranks and descriptions, as can be expected from any human system, and more

than any other nation or state known from history ever enjoyed. It is therefore our final duty, and ought to be our highest ambition, to transmit our constitution to our posterity unaltered and unimpaired, keeping at a distance from those who are given to change, and considering them as more to be dreaded than the pestilence or the sword.

Having said so much upon the public conduct of Mr. Fox, I should now proceed to enquire how far the private tenor of his life has been such as to point him out to distinguished notice and respect. But from this I will abstain, and draw a veil over his private life. I do not wish to accompany him to that grave of every thing that is virtuous or honourable in the human character, the gaming-table, nor to glance at that humiliating situation into which, after having squandered thousands of thousands, his frenzy for play has reduced him: I will not approach the purity of St. Anne's Hill, or disturb his slumbers on his bed of roses:

but I will ask you, who are his devoted admirers, this simple question, Would you wish your son, your brother, or your friend, to make either his public or private life their model for imitation? If not, I am well intitled to apply to you,

'Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor.' CATO.

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